

SECRET PRISONS

Q: How will you respond to allegations at the Human Rights Council that the maintains secret prisons? Why don't you address those publicly?

* We are aware of the serious concerns that have been raised in Europe in connection with alleged secret prisons, both in the media and through a number of formal inquiries.

* Fundamentally, these are allegations about U.S. actions in the context of the Global War on Terrorism.

* We are actively discussing these issues with European governments.

* The Secretary traveled to Europe in December, at which time she addressed these concerns directly. She stated that we work closely with our partners around the world to respond to the many challenges involved in fighting a new type of war. We fully respect the sovereignty of our partners in this effort. As the Secretary indicated, our action with respect to detainees are fully in keeping with our Constitution, our laws and our international treaty obligations.

* Nevertheless, as the Secretary indicated during her trip, the U.S. does not confirm, deny or otherwise discuss matters that might relate to alleged intelligence activities.

RENDITIONS

Q: How do we know individuals we have sent back to certain countries are not being tortured?

* The President has stated that we will not to send an individual back to a country where we believe he will be tortured. This is a matter of law and policy.

* Where appropriate, the United States seeks assurances that transferred persons will not be tortured. The executive branch considers a variety of factors on a case-by-case basis in deciding whether the assurances received are adequate.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Q: How do we respond to the use of religion and culture as an excuse for honor killings, FGM, other gender related violence, or other forms of human rights abuses?

* There are existing international standards about fundamental human rights, which include the right to security of the person regardless of gender. Religion cannot and should not be used as an excuse for violations of fundamental rights. We do not pull our punches when discussing topics such as honor killings, female genital mutilation and other abuses with countries that attempt to excuse reprehensible behavior. Furthermore, we have a wide range of programs to help address such concerns.